DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 395 453 FL 023 759

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TITLE Using a Participatory Conference Model for Planning Collaborative, Decentralized Professional Development. A Project of the German Teaching Community in Canada.
INSTITUTION Calgary Univ. (Alberta).
PUB DATE [96]
NOTE 21p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Affective Objectives; Change Strategies; *Conferences; Educational Change; Educational Objectives; Foreign Countries; *German; *Inservice Teacher Education; Instructional Development; *Language Teachers; Models; Professional Associations; *Professional Development; Program Development; Second Language Instruction; Teacher Associations; *Teacher Participation
IDENTIFIERS Canada

ABSTRACT

The planning, design, development, and implementation of a conference of Canadian German teachers to promote a collaborative, decentralized approach to professional development are described. The report begins with an overview of the professional development situation among German teachers in Canada. Particular focus is on efforts to make fundamental changes in the format of development programs by building teachers' individual motivation for and interest in professional development activities and their ability to participate in continuous learning, implementing a participatory, interactive conference model, and structuring a national professional association supporting this model. The theoretical background for such a model is also outlined. The process of creating a participatory conference is then detailed, including the establishment of objectives, design of the conference format, preliminary planning, creation of an opening information fair, and use of round-table discussions and action groups. The conference process is then described from the organizers' perspective, including many logistical issues and considerations and follow-up activities. Additional planning notes are provided in an appendix. (MSE)

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Using a Participatory Conference Model for Planning Collaborative, Decentralized Professional Development

A Project of the German Teaching Community in Canada

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Using a Participatory Conference Model for Planning Collaborative, Decentralized Professional Development*

A Project of the German Teaching Community in Canada**

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I. Introduction

a. An Overview of the Professional Development Situation

Canadian teachers of German are presently making fundamental changes in the format of their professional development. We want to take charge of our own professional development and organize it at the grass-roots level. We are doing this by building on teachers' own potential for professional growth when they engage in collaborative projects geared towards teaching development. The results are leading to a model of professional development that provides stronger, ongoing support in our continuing professional growth and that requires fewer resources. Under the leadership of the national association, the Canadian Council of Teachers of German (CCTG), we are developing a process-oriented and learner-centred professional development model where the main function of major professional conferences at a national level involves planning teaching development initiatives for the local level.

This objective represents a great challenge for the organizers of professional development. From the point of view of learning theory, the new orientation makes sense, but in a country like Canada where needs differ vastly from region to region and local centre to local centre, it is difficult for the organizers to plan and carry out practical strategies on a national level. This is why the experiences we have gained can be of particular interest to individuals who play a leadership role in professional associations facing challenges similar to our own: serving a constituency that is widely dispersed throughout the country and searching for models of professional development and change that are participatory, self-directed and decentralized in nature.

The main elements of the Canadian change initiative among German teachers are:

- A paradigm shift in the didactics of professional development from a transmission model where experts make presentations at occasional, organized meetings or conferences to an interactive model where participants are engaged in continuous learning processes
- Implementation of a participatory, interactive conference model
- Proposals for the structure of a national association capable of supporting and fostering a participatory, decentralized professional development model

- Open, co-operative discussion processes at the meta-level of professional development planning.

b. Context for Developing the Participatory Conference Model

Growing awareness that the professional development support structure of Canadian teachers of German is gravely threatened by various structural, political and fiscal factors provided the impetus for change. The implications of the increasing financial cutbacks became abundantly clear to the representatives of the Canadian German as a foreign language (GFL, also referred to as DaF, Deutsch als Fremdsprache) associations attending the national conference in 1992. Traditional large-scale conferences were obviously no longer feasible: public funding to promote the teaching of German, both from the Federal Republic and from Canadian sources was dwindling and the provincial ministries throughout the country were introducing cost-saving measures. For Canadian teachers of German this meant fundamental problems with regard to future training, professional development and collegial co-operation. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, members of the German teachers' associations decided to test new approaches to professional development and conference planning that promised to be feasible under the new conditions.

c. Theoretical Background

Traditional models of professional development are designed to bring about change in teaching practice by transmitting new content, materials and methods. Speakers at large-scale conferences present their professional expertise in the form of lectures, presentations and workshops, and it is assumed that conference participants will translate into action what they have passively absorbed. Current research, however, has shown that the effect of this type of transmission model is transitory, whereas models which rely on principles of active and interactive experiential learning are actually much more likely to lead to change in an individual's teaching practice.

A fairly widespread phenomenon of conference fatigue and a resulting lack of interest in professional development had been noticed among Canadian GFL teachers. The underlying problem, in our opinion, was the manner in which knowledge was transmitted at our large conferences. As passive recipients, teachers felt disenfranchised and excluded from the genesis of innovative didactics - a phenomenon that had a disappointing, alienating and demotivating effect on the individual.

The following factors were identified as contributing to dissatisfaction with professional development as delivered at large conferences:

- A disparity between conference themes and the actual program: few offerings that actually relate to the stated theme
- A lack of contributions that would be of immediate use in the classroom
- A plethora of thematically general contributions without practical relevance to the experiences of individual teachers
- Communication between participants is often marginalized with experts and their presentations taking centre-stage: collegial dis-

cussions remain so informal that they do not lead to subsequent actions

- A lack of opportunities to translate the findings of the presenters into practical action plans (no post-event assessment)
- Geographic isolation which hamper follow-up meetings and ongoing communication
- Discrepancies in the final conference programme theme and individual contributions (the odds-and-ends phenomenon or the well-known "supermarket" syndrome!).

In order to counteract conference fatigue and the resulting waning interest in professional development, a participatory model of professional development was needed. Such a model was designed as a counterbalance to the aforementioned negative factors by producing the following change in perspective on the part of participants:

- An active rather than passive stance with regard to professional development
- The will to be autonomous (the readiness to work as self-directed, responsible and self-motivated individuals)
- Professional maturity (by contributing to the sharing and development of professional expertise)
- Collegial interdependence instead of dependency on experts
- A feeling of self-worth
- Job satisfaction.

Although the specific problems we had to deal with left us no choice but to develop a participatory model, this does not mean that we reject transmission models as a matter of principle. The transmission of professional expertise plays an important role in providing the required impetus for certain topic areas. Experts reporting on their findings can, at the appropriate moment, generate new ideas to be applied in the classroom.

A participatory model which accesses the thoughts and experiences of the conference participants is complementary to the transmission model. It would be appropriate in the following situations:

- Defining of objectives and planning of projects (visioning)
- Self-directed renewal of a professional association
- The establishment of local project groups with concrete plans for action.

The two conference models (transmission and interaction) obviously serve different purposes. They are not mutually exclusive but will eventually have to be integrated in a meaningful manner. A long-term, constantly self-renewing concentric process might proceed like this:

- Teachers recognize a need for professional development
- They formulate a joint objective at a participatory meeting

- They obtain impulses for specific action goals at a transmission-type conference

- The action plans are acted upon by decentralized collaborative local project groups.

II. How German Teachers Made a Participatory Conference a Reality

The following is a discussion of the elements of our conference model, the interaction model. We are drawing largely on experiences gained at three experimental conferences.[1] The focus, however, will be on the last of these, the 1995 conference in Regina, since this is where the conceptual planning and its translation into action were carried furthest.

a. Objectives

As a matter of principle, each conference, as a whole, was geared towards fulfilling a clear objective or set of objectives. At a previous conference (Kontakt '93 in Calgary), the objective was to identify focal points for the future of German instruction in Canada. At a later meeting (Working Session Calgary '94), the conference objective was to design a new professional development model. To ensure a concentrated and focused effort on the part of participants, a clear objective was made apparent. The Impuls-Seminar Kontakt '95 in Regina provided proof of this. When objections against conference contents and processes were raised, the organizers were able to point to clearly formulated objectives and were thus able to give a positive direction to the conference.

The over-all goal for the Impuls-Seminar Kontakt '95 was to bring about a paradigm shift in the professional development of Canadian teachers of German. We did this by emphasizing the following questions:

- How can we establish a bottom-up approach to professional development?

- How can we do a better job of accessing the professional growth potential of teachers?

In order to achieve this goal, the following concrete working objectives were formulated:

- To demonstrate teachers' potential for professional development

- To awaken, activate and set in motion their potential for professional development

- To develop project plans for local and regional "grass-roots" clusters involved in professional development

- To lay the groundwork for personal involvement in professional development at the local or regional level by including colleagues in the planning process.

b. Design of the Conference Format

The experiences of the Working Session '94 had shown co-operative work in small groups to be the most productive way of proceeding. For this reason, it seemed desirable to adopt this structure for the Impuls-Seminar with its approximately 100 participants. In order to achieve our goal of a "participatory conference", we structured the seminar as a series of open, interactive

working sessions with co-operative, project-oriented activities.

A successful participatory professional conference required careful planning and flexible process control, not unlike the methodology used in co-operative learning. All work phases of the conference were appropriate to the given objectives and occurred in the following order:

- Stock-taking with regard to the conference theme
- Further exploration of the theme through discussions
- Reporting and sharing of discussion results
- Discussions leading to the development of action plans at the local and regional levels
- Reporting and sharing of action plans.

Following each of these experimental conferences, full proceedings with detailed descriptions of the discussion results and conference activities were published.[2]

c. Preliminary Planning

Preliminary planning consisted of an extended lively exchange between geographically widely dispersed colleagues. The preparation phase lasted from May 1993 until May 1995 and was largely handled by e-mail, telephone and fax. In June 1994, a planning committee[3] did eventually meet to develop a first concrete concept for Kontakt '95. The task of sending applications for financial support to Canadian and German authorities was subsequently delegated to two committee members.

In the process of planning Kontakt '95, it was important to be aware of the close interconnectedness of this and previous conferences. The conference was seen as a landmark in an ongoing process spanning several years. For this reason, the results of the Working Session '94 in Calgary were given special consideration.

The first announcement of the conference with a declaration of its objective and a preliminary programme concept were mailed out in July 1994. The intention was to take stock of areas of interest of potential participants and of the contributions to the conference they might wish to make. Additional information was provided on a regular basis during fall and winter.

From the responses it was not possible to arrive at an overall concept which would have corresponded to the conference objective. A programme committee was formed to come up with a conference programme that would do justice both to the proposed conference contributions, which relied largely on a traditional conference format, and the original conference objectives. There was thus a danger that the original objectives for the conference might not be achieved. The programme committee soon realized that incompatible concepts and the limited time available made it impossible to have a conference that was both a traditional transmission-style and an innovative participatory event. The committee therefore decided to present the proposed presentations and workshops in the form of an information fair and to use them as points of departure for the round-table discussions. The idea for the information fair format arose from experiences that Esther Enns gained while working with Michael Legutke as planning consultant for the 1994 joint conference of the Goethe Institute in

Munich, the British Council and the German Association for the Promotion of Teacher In-Service Education.

The conference programme was designed with the following considerations in mind:

It was not intended to be

- dictated by submissions from persons wishing to give presentations and workshops
- a supermarket-style offering of ready-to-use materials and ideas.

It was intended as

- Preparation for teacher trainers to activate local "grass-roots" clusters
- A participatory work process
- An integrated focused learning process in three phases.

To this end, the following elements served as the framework for the programme:

- The information fair as a means of taking stock of didactic achievements
- The round-table discussions as inspiration for joint professional development projects
- The planning discussions as a means of forming action groups involved in professional development.

During the fine-tuning of the programme, the organizers realized that the participatory character of this conference required the presence of an expert in process-oriented development who would act as consultant. They therefore retained the services of a conference planning consultant to act as observer and meta-facilitator throughout the conference.

Since the associations involved in organizing the conference were also holding their executive meetings during the conference and a restructuring of the associations was on the agenda, a representative with constitutional expertise was asked to direct and steer this initiative.

In order to achieve the objectives of the conference, the physical space had to be consistent with the conference concept. The Language Institute at the University of Regina offered the kind of venue which made a participatory conference feasible: It had classrooms with movable chairs and tables as well as a larger conference room suitable for the information fair and capable of being used for interactive plenary sessions in the round. A further advantage was that all conference rooms, food services and accommodation were largely integrated in one building and removed from downtown distractions.

The local infrastructure was well suited to the conference objectives and helped to create an enjoyable and intimate atmosphere in which people found it easy to communicate. An airport shuttle service, friendly assistance from students working at the conference desk, social events where participants could get acquainted, friendly conversations during conference breaks, a working supper and a reception by the Honourary Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany all contributed to creating this atmosphere. The inclusion of these interpersonal dimensions was of vital impor-

tance in making the innovative conference paradigm a reality.

Three weeks before the conference, the programme committee sent out the following material for pre-conference reading:

- An article entitled *Teacher-Directed Professional Development* by Bryan Ellefson who describes in a very readable way the development on which our seminar is based.
- Thought-provoking ideas (Denkanstöße) for the four topic areas of the round-table discussions
- An up-to-date conference plan
- Proposals for professional development, *Professionalising Second Language Instruction*, by a colleague from one of our associations.

This final mailing was supplemented at the conference site by a thick conference binder with local and organizational information as well as the above-mentioned documents, the agendas, minutes and by-laws of the PCTG and the CCTG and ample room for records and personal notes.

d. An Information Fair as Conference Opener

The organizers had decided to do without the traditional keynote address. Instead, the conference opened with a short welcome by the host institution and the organizers and a few words about the objectives and format of the conference.

In lieu of the keynote address, there were thus two full hours at the start of the conference dedicated to the information fair. It gave participants an opportunity to enter into direct contact with the exhibitors and, where they were interested, to obtain more detailed information. The fair guide in the appendix was intended to provide direction to the fair visit and to help participants keep the conference goal in mind.

The fair exhibits had largely been offered ahead of time. In the conference binder, they were grouped according to the four topic areas of the conference. The exhibits were set up in the larger conference room and the adjacent foyer. Colleagues helped each other in setting up their respective booths in the course of an evening social. The exhibits remained in place for the duration of the conference, forming a visual backdrop to the didactic achievements of many conference participants.

e. Round-table Discussions

The round-table discussions gave participants an opportunity to develop professional growth projects with their colleagues on the basis of their didactic achievements without, however, resorting to the presentation format. It was hoped that the very structure of these round-table discussions would help participants to enter into dialogues and systematic discussions of individual experiences and to develop action proposals for general use.
Several colleagues were asked to join facilitator teams for the round-table discussions. Extensive preparation with regard to the topic was not required of them. Besides being participants in the discussion, the four facilitators on each team were to steer the discussion and to act as recorders. On the eve of the conference, there was a preliminary planning session for the facilita-

tors. It included an orientation consisting of an explanation of their function and a presentation of the conference objectives. The programme committee had envisioned their role as follows:

The facilitators were to...

- arrange the seminar rooms
- help the members of the group to become acquainted and to create a positive working atmosphere
- help members of the group to formulate their focal points with regard to the topic
- help people to define a limited focus for the discussion
- steer the conversation only as needed, e.g. when somebody talked too much or deviated from the topic
- ensure that notes were taken during the discussion and a report for the plenary session was prepared.

All participants had received "Denkanstöße", ideas relating to the four topic areas, ahead of time as a preparation for the round-table discussions. They were not meant to provide a predetermined framework but to generate ideas and to provide a lively starting point for the round-table discussions. Appendix 2 shows the topics and ideas.

Following the information fair on the first day, the conference participants joined one of the four round-table discussions taking place in the smaller seminar rooms. Depending on the size of the group, the getting acquainted phase may have taken more time than anticipated. It also proved difficult at times to relate personal professional experiences to the discussion topic and the conference objective. Although this exchange was an important phase of the learning process of the conference, it turned out to distract some participants from the conference objective. Nevertheless, many concrete proposals could be worked out on this first day.

The round-table discussions continued on the following day, and participants were free to choose the group they wished to join. Contrary to the expectations of the planning committee, many colleagues remained with their original group. During the plenary session at the end of the second day, many detailed and well thought-out plans in poster form were presented to the plenum. (The results will not be reprinted here; their content can be found in the conference proceedings.)

f. Action Groups

Following the conclusion of the round-table discussions, the participants formed action groups whose task it was to plan concrete projects for local or regional "grass-roots" clusters. For practical reasons, the action groups were formed along regional lines. Participants from the four groups took their impulses from the round-table discussions directly into the regional groups. Each regional action group developed a concrete plan to be acted upon by the local "grass-roots" clusters. The colleagues in these regional action groups would then take on the responsibility for implementing the planned projects and for regularly sharing information about the progress of their projects with other regional groups.

The action plans of the regional groups were presented at the final plenary session. They were displayed on posters arranged in geographical order from east to west. A large map of Canada provided the backdrop. The action plans were presented without further comment. By arranging the contributions of regional groups along geographical lines, the programme committee hoped to bring out their supra-regional interconnectedness.

III. The Conference Process from the Organizers' Perspective

Preliminary Phase

A sign of the meticulous planning was the flow of information prior to the conference. Conference information was sent to all members of Canadian GFL associations a year ahead of time. This information was up-dated several times and eventually limited to potential participants. The information packages consisted of the following components:

- Announcement of the conference, an invitation to participate and a registration form
- Interim reports from the organizers concerning planning and financing, with a preliminary conference programme, since the sluggish response made organization difficult
- Announcement of the changed conference format and programme
- Specific information for fair exhibitors and round-table discussion facilitators
- Reading material (articles and reports) relevant to the professional development concept.

Despite the repeated mailings and the detailed explanations of the conference concept, some aspects seemed to remain unclear to a large segment of the target group. The change in the programme format from workshop/presentation to information fair seemed to cause particular offence. It frustrated some colleagues and was even perceived as insulting, as became obvious from the clarification questions addressed to the organizers. The conceptional and practical reasons for the necessary programme changes have already been discussed. Suffice it to say that the above-mentioned reaction brought a psychological dimension into play that, on the one hand, was negative, but, on the other hand, produced a desirable emotional component: participants did not remain neutral but were emotionally involved, which is one of the reasons why the atmosphere, from the beginning, was highly charged!

At the registration desk, all participants received a 3-ring conference binder containing material pertaining to the organization and conference topics. It was an idea that had proved successful at the Kontakt '93 Conference. This format is particularly suited to a participatory conference format where participants are constantly taking notes and must to be able to refer to them at a later date. The conference binders were prepared by a local team with the programme committee providing the content for the programme.

The programme committee chose the facilitators for the round-table discussions on the basis of the following general criteria:

- People who, in their conference registration, had voiced an interest in acting as facilitators
- People who had some experience in the given round-table discussion topics
- People who had gained experience in the Kontakt '93 work groups
- People from different teaching levels
- Women and men
- People who received funding to attend the conference but had not offered a contribution to the information fair.

In order to ensure a participatory leadership style, the choice of facilitators was governed by the following concepts of group dynamics:

- Democratic structure by having several facilitators for every round-table discussion (nobody is the centre of attention)
- Balanced gender representation on each facilitator team
- Mutual support and control in participatory leadership.

Facilitator Orientation

Roughly two months before the conference, the chosen facilitators received a written invitation to accept this task and were briefed about their roles. As already mentioned in the description of the round-table discussions, the programme committee met with the facilitators for an orientation session on the day before the conference. The orientation was deliberately limited to defining the role of the facilitator, and there was no attempt to pre-determine the round-table discussions. It was suggested that the facilitator teams begin to work out concrete plans that very evening. First initiatives in the concrete planning of the round-table discussions were largely limited to choosing a room and arranging its furniture. There may have been several reasons for this: e.g. the concept of the facilitator role in the round-table discussions had not yet been internalized; there was, as yet, no psychological rapport between the team members; and the late arrival of some facilitators made their early integration into the teams difficult.

During the round-table discussions, facilitators often found it difficult to assume roles of equal weight. All too often there was a tendency to turn to the most experienced persons, consciously or subconsciously expecting that they would or should play a leading role. Occasionally, a facilitator may have played an overly dominant role. That such situations should arise, is only too understandable, since few had any experience with the open, participatory conference model.

Arrangement of Conference Rooms

The conference concept was reflected in the choice of the rooms. The round-table discussions took place in classrooms where the furniture could be arranged to suit large or small groups. A larger conference room was available for the plenary sessions. The information fair exhibits were placed along the walls of this room. The chairs in the centre could be arranged to suit the occasion. The most frequently needed arrangement was that of a circle or semi-circle

which allowed all participants to feel on an equal footing and to see each other. This arrangement came closest to reflecting the conference concept. For the introductory plenary session, there was an additional inner circle of four chairs. From this inner circle, the programme committee introduced the conference concept in the form of a conversation with each other. Throughout the conference, the exhibits remained as vivid reminders and references to the achievements of many participants and helped to create a lively atmosphere.

The attractive facilities of the Language Institute, deliberately chosen with this aim in mind, enabled participants to carry on informal chats outside the seminar rooms.

Services for Later Documentation

In view of producing the conference proceedings at a later date, several services were organized:

- Stacks of poster-size paper, flip charts and pens were available to all participants, allowing them to produce detailed notes of the discussions. Flip charts are especially useful since notes can be saved for future use and do not have to be erased as would be the case with notes on chalk boards.

- A typist and a computer were available for the duration of the conference, making it possible to have discussion results immediately typed and photocopied.

- One person took pictures of all phases of the conference, all fair exhibits and notes on posters and chalk boards as well as of all social events.

Process-Planning Consultants

As is the costum for conferences, there were organizers who planned the content and the logistics. In this instance, this task fell largely to the chair persons of the associations organizing the event. In September of 1994, they applied for funding from StADaF. A colleague from Regina took on the job of communicating with conference participants, organizing logistical aspects at the conference site and applying for further funding from public and private sponsors. Eventually, it became necessary to delegate various tasks. For this reason, an external programme committee was set up in February of 1995 to carry on with developing the conference content.

The organizers realized almost from the start that they would need a process-planning consultant for the planned open participatory conference format. During Kontakt '93 when this approach had been tested in the working groups, a Swiss expert in professional development had been very successful as a process-planning consultant. Based on this experience, he was asked to resume this role at Kontakt '95.

The programme committee did some preparatory work for the consultation process by developing the concept and role of the facilitators and making general plans for their orientation. From the beginning, the programme committee was also quite aware that this open conference concept required "rolling planning" which could not be finalized in every detail. Instead, the conference programme was to remain flexible and rely on feed-back, observations and reflections at the conference site.

The role of the programme committee underwent some change: Prior to the conference, it was involved in programme decisions; during the conference, it transformed itself into a conference program executive team with the invited process-planning consultant offering his expertise and psychological support. Fortunately, he timed his arrival so that he could travel to Regina together with the conference team. The all-day car trip gave us a chance to mentally prepare ourselves and to further define our role as conference program executives. Unfortunately, the distance between Regina and Calgary caused some co-ordination problems just before the start of the conference. This led to disagreement within the organizing team and was much regretted by everybody. At this moment, in particular, a positive mood, which we had hoped would rub off on the participants, was essential. The lesson we learned from this experience was that, for an open conference with conference consultation, it would be desirable for the organizational and the program executive teams to get together on the day before the actual conference to prepare themselves for their joint tasks.

Emergent, Responsive Planning

Emergent, responsive planning involves assessing each conference phase as soon as it is finished in order to re-design the next phases accordingly. The general programme structure may remain intact, but the concept of the next working phases is adapted to reflect the experiences gained from the previous ones. In introducing each new working phase, the program executive team has to immediately come up with explanations for the changing conception which it then transmits to the participants. To the outsider, it may appear as though everything had been planned ahead of time, but the program executive actually spends all its time observing, listening and developing new concepts in response to the emerging demands of the situation.

Psychological Strain

The emergent, responsive planning process at Kontakt '95 made it necessary for the program executive team to meet after and sometimes even during each working phase. Frequently, the program executive needed feed-back from the participants to ensure that its observations had been correct. This enormous amount of analytical and creative effort in addition to the programmed events was a relentless strain on the executive team, which led to considerable stress. To the conference participants, it may have appeared that the conference program executive team stayed aloof of the informal social gatherings. It is important to understand, however, that during those times the program executives were either involved in further planning or simply too exhausted to socialize.

The conference program executive team received support from the process-planning consultant whose role it was to observe and reflect for them. Since the three members of the program executive were colleagues of the participants, they were subject to greater psychological strain than the neutral, invited guest from abroad. Given his psychological distance and his experience in conducting process-oriented professional development, he was better able to analyze the situation and to provide solutions.

The following factors caused the kind of strain on the conference program executive which made the psychological support from a process-planning consultant necessary:

- The open, project-oriented format of the conference which allowed only limited control over the course of events while the program executives nevertheless felt responsible for the final outcome

- The resistance to any innovation shown by some participants

- The often aggressive way in which some participants voiced their disappointment over not being able to offer their prepared contributions in the format of a presentation or a workshop

- The often unrealistic expectations some conference participants had of individual members of the program executive and organizing teams

- A lack of understanding, on the part of some participants, of the psychological strain experienced by the conference program executive team

- Constant involvement which barely allowed time to eat or rest

- Physical exhaustion which impaired the ability to concentrate

- Stress, stress, stress!

On the other hand, it must be emphasized that many conference participants demonstrated their understanding of and generous support for the program executive team and the organizers by spontaneously accepting new tasks, offering positive comments and demonstrating their commitment to the new professional development concept. This kind of positive co-operation made it possible to counteract the negative factors and to make the conference a success.

Follow-up Activities

The preparation of conference proceedings had been planned ahead of time. In the case of an open conference concept, the drawing up of conference proceedings is of particular importance because...

- during the limited duration of the conference, it is psychologically impossible to absorb all that has been discussed

- not all participants were able to participate in all round-table discussions

- not all participants were familiar with the new professional development concept which made it necessary to provide in-depth explanations

- only a limited number of colleagues were able to attend the conference

- it is necessary to refer to the results in order to proceed with our work.

Esther Enns and Juergen Jahn offered to prepare the conference proceedings - Esther Enns because of her background in professional development theories and Juergen Jahn because of his expertise as editor of *Forum Deutsch* and of the Kontakt '93 publication.

We began our work on the conference proceedings during the conference by

- collecting all flip charts, notes and hand-outs
- jotting down ideas as future memory aids.

The timing of our work on the extensive conference proceedings was of vital importance. As members of the program executive team, we had reached a state of exhaustion by the time the conference ended and had to allow ourselves a few days of rest. We nevertheless felt that it was of psychological importance that we informally exchange our impressions with each other and with other colleagues during this time. The advantage of this was that the experience lost nothing of its vividness. Within a week of the conclusion of the conference, we began drafting the proceedings. As university faculty members, we were able to devote ourselves entirely to this task since we had no teaching duties during that period. Our work consisted of the following steps:

- A rough draft of the contents which should constitute the proceedings
- A description of historical events leading up to this particular conference model
- Choosing already existing documents that would round off the proceedings
- Ordering materials according to conference phases
- Ordering materials for each conference phase according to topic and logical sequence and producing them as separate units
- Completing incomplete notes based on our recollections
- Choosing diagrams, graphics and photographs.

Preparing the conference proceedings required analytical and creative efforts. We had to find the focal point and express the guiding principles of the very assorted notes which contained overlapping ideas and showed great stylistic variation.

A final aspect of the follow-up activities is the continuing flow of communication. The following strategies should be mentioned:

- Distribution of the conference proceedings
- Publication of the conference proceedings in journals of the associations
- Informal letters, e-mails, phone calls, faxes between GFL teaching staff
- Informal and public sharing of projects among local project groups.

Appendix 1

Information Fair Guide

- What is completely new to me?
- About which exhibit would I like more information?
- What would I like to take home? a) for my own classroom b) for my colleagues at home...
- What appears so familiar that I myself might offer a contribution to this topic?

Appendix 2

Topic 1: Materials:
Which ones and where do they come from?

- Who decides which materials will be used in your classroom?
- What problems does this create?
- What opportunities do you have to choose your own materials?
- To what extent are you satisfied with this situation?
- What are your criteria when selecting materials?
- To what extent is your selection influenced by the following criteria: Place of origin of materials, authenticity, topicality, visual appearance, methodological innovation, relevance of content for the target group, flexibility with regard to being didacticised by you yourself...?
- To what degree do you produce your own materials for the classroom?
- What are your motives for doing that?
- What problems does this create?
- To what degree do you find it desirable to co-operate with colleagues in working on given materials or to prepare your own materials?

Topic 2: Didacticising Materials

- In what situations do you find it necessary to didacticise material?
- Do you enjoy this?
- Why or why not?
- Which considerations, do you think, must go into didacticising material yourself?
- How do you set a learning objective? How do you achieve an effective lead-in?
- How do you organize the learning steps?
- What type of exercises do you plan?
- What results do you expect? How do you evaluate the results?

- To what extent do you find co-operation with colleagues helpful?
- What are your experiences with co-operation?
- What opportunities do you have to collaborate in didacticising materials?
- From where should the initiatives come?
- From the language consultants? From the Goethe-Institute? From the universities? From publishers? From your colleagues? From you yourself?

Topic 3: The Daily Grind - Coping Strategies

a) Motivation of the teaching staff

- To what extent are you satisfied with the status of GFL as a subject?
- To what extent is your work as a GFL teacher recognized and appreciated?
- What are the psychological and financial consequences?
- Where do you find the inspiration for teaching?
- Where, as part of your daily routines, do you discover new impulses?
- To what extent have you experienced the following: Weariness/ exhaustion, isolation, lack of interest, lack of time? How do you cope with these crises or situations?

b) Motivation of students

- To what extent are you satisfied with the motivation of your students?
- Do they seem to be interested in learning German?
- What status do your students ascribe to German as a subject?
- How important is German to them in cases where German is chosen as an elective?
- What are the phases or topics of the lesson that your students feel enthusiastic about.?
- What, in your opinion, explains the motivation of your students?
- What is the role of German as a subject at your institution?
- What role do you, as a teacher, play?
- To what extent do the constraints of education policies determine what you do?
- Can you think of ways of exerting an even more positive influence on the motivation of the learners?

Topic 4: Professional Development - Who? Where? How?

- What is the importance of professional development in the teaching profession?
- Who can/must assume responsibility for ensuring professional development?
- Who has the necessary qualifications to provide professional development? Who should/can provide impulses for professional development?
- Where should/can professional development take place?
- To what extent can/must professional development be relevant for local or regional conditions?
- What are the roles that teacher trainers should/can play? Which phases and steps are indispensable for an effective professional development process?
- To what extent are exchanges between different instructional levels desirable?

Notes

*This article is based on the conference proceedings of 1995 joint meetings of the Prairie Council on the Teaching of German, British Columbia Council of Teachers of German, and the Canadian Council of Teachers of German , published as: *Tagungsbericht des Impulsseminars Kontakt '95 und des Planungsgesprächs der SKKD im Rahmen der Kontakt '95 Tagung*. It is a translation by Elisabeth Kim of the University of Regina of the following summary article: Enns, Esther and Juergen Jahn. "Handlungsplanung durch interaktive Fachtagungen: Projektbeschreibung aus der kanadischen DaF-Fortbildungspraxis". In: *Handbuch für Sprachärbeit*, (Handboolk for Language Development) Teil 6 / II (Part 6, Vol. 2)Michael Legutke, ed.,Munich: Goethe-Institut, 1996.

** This project was sponsored in large part by StADaF (Federal Republic of Germany) and Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada.

Footnotes

[1] a) "Dicussion groups", Kontakt '93. Sponsored by the Prairie Council on the Teaching of German, University of Calgary, May 6 - 9, 1993.

b) Round-Table Discussion on the Professional Development of Canadian Teachers of German, Canadian Council of Teachers of German, University of Calgary, April 22 - 24, 1994.

c) Impuls-Seminar Kontakt '95 and Plannning Sessions on the Professional Development of Canadian Teachers of German. Sponsored by Prairie Council on the Teaching of German, British Columbia Council of Teachers of German, and the Canadian Council on the Teaching of German, University of Regina, May 5 - 8, 1995.

[2] (a) Enns, Esther E. und Juergen Jahn. *Tagungsbericht des Impuls-Seminars Kontakt '95 und des Planungsgesprächs der SKKD im Rahmen der Kontakt '95 Tagung - University of Regina*. University of Calgary: Prairie Council on the Teaching of German, British Columbia Council of Teachers of German, und Ständige Konferenz Kanadischer Deutschlehrer, 1995.

(b) Jahn, Juergen, Ed. *Kontakt '93; Proceedings of the Kontakt '93 Conference at the University of Calgary May 6-9, 1993*. University of Calgary: Prairie Council on the Teaching of German, 1993.

(c) Enns, Esther E. and Juergen Jahn. "Arbeitsgespräch zur Koordinationsplanung der Fortbildung kanadischer Deutschlehrerinnen und Deutschlehrer." *Forum Deutsch* 6 (2), 1994, 1-10.

[3] In June 1994 the following met in Regina to develop a first concept for Kontakt '95: Rupert Barensteiner, Susanne Bechtold, Esther Enns, Catherine Froese-Klassen, Kenneth Hegler, Michael Kage, Walter Kampen, Sabine Kaufmann, Moni McKinstry, Hannah Noerenberg, André Oberlé, Manfred Prokop, Rubi Rubrecht, Ingeborg Schlichtmann, Norman Sieweke, Cornelia Taschow

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